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25 April 1980

MEMORANDUM**LIBERIA: Possible Consequences of an Attempt to Evacuate US Citizens**

The US Embassy in Monrovia reports that the approximately 5000 US citizens in Liberia are safe for the moment. But their position is tenuous and could easily be imperiled if the country's unsophisticated military leaders see official US action as detrimental or not supportive of their interests. If the notion develops among the politically naive NCOs on the ruling council that the US is hostile toward or reluctant to cast its lot with the new government, sharp anti-US sentiment could develop among the council and spread to the population in general. Although the situation in Monrovia is relatively calm now, the US citizens also could be endangered by indiscriminate mob action touched off by a variety of factors, such as an invasion scare or another round of executions that either spontaneously or by design reignited anti-Tolbert sentiment.

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The new Liberian authorities--who have expressed friendship for the US and look to us for support--have repeatedly assured the US Embassy that the government will do all it can to protect the US citizens. The government, in fact, has made efforts to provide protection for American citizens and property, and it appears that US citizens and businesses were not specifically targeted for harassment after the coup. In the general atmosphere of violence and instability

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis. It was coordinated with Directorate for Operations. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to Chief, Africa Division, OPA, [redacted]

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that followed the coup, however, some US citizens were mistreated--there were reports of beating, rapes and armed robberies--and US owned businesses suffered over \$1,000,000 worth of damages. These incidents were perpetrated by civilians, renegade troops or individuals dressed as troops--the distribution of uniforms has traditionally been lax in Liberia. [REDACTED]

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Given the breakdown in discipline among Liberian armed forces and the lack of sophistication among the NCOs in control, it is unlikely that the US could rely on Liberian authorities for effective assistance and cooperation should evacuation of US citizens become necessary. In fact, the US Embassy believes that a call for the departure of US dependants and non-essential personnel would be seen by the council members as an indication of US hostility and could evoke a negative reaction. The council would see an attempt to reduce sharply the US presence as a strong signal of US disapproval of the new regime. In view of the volatile atmosphere, the council's reaction probably would be mirrored by the local populace, raising the possibility of anti-US demonstrations. [REDACTED]

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The introduction of US troops to facilitate the evacuation of the US citizens* might be portrayed by some on the council as an invasion. Invasion fear is high and unfounded rumors of at least two incursions from neighboring countries have circulated since the coup. Given the unsettled atmosphere, the reaction from the public and the troops could well be hostile and would almost certainly touch off attacks on US installations and businesses, that the government might be unable or unwilling to control. [REDACTED]

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Should the US introduce troops to facilitate an evacuation, we would almost certainly come in for loud condemnation from some OAU states, although in private our friends would probably be understanding of the move. Unfriendly African states might be quick to use the move to stir up propaganda against our efforts to gain access to facilities elsewhere

**The vast majority of US citizens are in Monrovia. Others, including some 200 Peace Corps volunteers, are scattered throughout the country. Most US citizens probably would follow any evacuation order, but some--such as missionaries--would be reluctant to leave. [REDACTED]*

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in Africa. They may claim that with a presence in Africa, we would be encouraged toward further intervention on the continent. [REDACTED]

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Although pro-US sentiment apparently has prevailed among the new government's military and civilian leaders, this would almost certainly evaporate in the face of a rescue attempt. At the very least, those still favoring the US might feel forced to go along with their more radical colleagues to preserve their positions. Leftists or left leaning elements in Liberia--some of whom are in the government and have aspirations to push the military aside--would probably try to take advantage of any anti-US hysteria generated by a rescue attempt. [REDACTED]

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The USSR would almost certainly attempt to encourage or exploit such an atmosphere. The Soviets, who apparently have little influence with the new government, have already labeled our criticism of the executions as interference in Liberian affairs. [REDACTED]

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